

PERSPECTIVES ON THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY
INFLUENCE OF OUTSIDE POWERS

by

Henry S. Albinski

Harold Wilson is reputed to have remarked that, in politics, two weeks is a long time. Looking forward five, ten and even fifteen years is obviously an elusive enterprise. But it is not an unprofitable enterprise, and its meaningfulness in relation to plausible political and security scenarios of the Pacific island scene, more or less as of the year 2000, is particularly apropos. It is apropos because it deals with a regional setting whose international significance is increasingly recognized, yet which is highly susceptible to outside power influence, and for the time continues to define and shape its own personality.

The present assessment undertakes to anticipate outside power political and security effects by applying categories of analysis that coincide with the island countries' own perceived, dominant concerns. To begin, however, some special attributes of the Pacific island region should be noted, since they impose more than usual difficulties on efforts to make confident projections.

At least three, distinctive features that typify the Pacific island community invite special caution in forecasting the region's middle range future. The first refers to decision-making style within the island countries. The resident countries are small with disproportionately modest and relatively unspecialized bureaucratic establishments. There in other words is not much by way of independently gathered intelligence data,

analytical expertise or breadth of applied experience that can be passed to political decision-makers. Political parties do not themselves enjoy much institutionalized autonomy which otherwise could enable them to influence the judgments of political elites. The senior political elites operate in contexts of substantial personalized authority, and often are second or still first generation national leaders, with wide national visibility and following.

The upshot is highly individualized decision-making in the Pacific islands. Since this condition is not likely to change much in the next ten or fifteen years, the region will remain governed in a manner considerably less routinized, less subject to institutional constraints and therefore less predictable than would obtain in more established and complex political systems. The intangibles surrounding leadership styles and programmatic preferences among the region's remaining non-independent entities, especially those under French control, further obscure efforts at determining foreshadowed political behavior, and thereby regional-outside power relation outcomes.

A second factor complicating confident scenario-building refers to various intraregional characteristics. Hence, the greater South Pacific region, or Oceania, can be construed as a series of subsets as well as a greater region in itself. The Melanesian/Micronesian/Polynesian distinction is more than cultural. The Melanesians for instance represent the most populous group, thereby engendering unease elsewhere as to their possible interest in or capacity to dominate South Pacific affairs. Overall, the Melanesians have emerged as the most politically militant on international questions. Until now most of the South Pacific Forum members have represented a British-New

Zealand-Australian colonial background. Consensus has arguably been easier than it will be toward the end of the century when there will be more independent regional entities, and the newcomers will be of French and American colonial/administrative derivation. In other words, the region will become more, not less, politically diverse, fragmented and complex, and outside powers will find it more difficult to anticipate its behavior and to respond to it.

The subtheme of this phenomenon is that interstate rivalries within the region will likely accentuate, beyond the kind of jostling exemplified by aspects of PNG-Fiji relations. The reasons for increased interstate rivalry could include maneuvering for leadership, widening differences in political orientation or in preindependence heritage (for instance the behavior of a postindependence New Caledonia), the susceptibilities of regional countries to more intense, outside power blandishments, or regional country apprehensions about outside power reprisals against offending policies. The latter point has been intimated regarding Fiji's periodic reluctance to offend France, lest France influence EEC policies that could undermine Fiji's sugar market.

Domestic disturbances in the island countries could of course severely discommode some of the most carefully laid predictions about the region's politics. One of the more obvious circumstances would entail social disorder over the political future of the French territories. The effects would be felt among neighboring states as well as the actual sites of commotion. In case of trouble in New Caledonia, there would be especially profound effects on Vanuatu's approach. And, in the last resort, conflict in established, sovereign nations cannot be entirely discounted; for example plural society

tensions in Fiji or secessionist unrest in PNG. Apart from impact on the political integrity of such affected nations, serious civil disturbances could distract or even incapacitate those nations in respect to their normal role as Pacific island community actors.

A final caution about forecasting conditions in the South Pacific refers to outside rather than to resident states. Even assuming that there is no overt breakdown in the central balance, or regionally, the essential point is that many of the interested outside powers are latecomers to approaching the South Pacific region as a whole. They may have had a historically distant political presence (e.g., Japan); or they may focus mainly on one segment of the region (e.g., the US vis-a-vis Micronesia and the special case of American Samoa); or they may have been present for some time but without being especially mindful of wider, transregional political/security implications of their policies (e.g., France); or they have been rebuffed and to date unable to establish a meaningful foothold (e.g., the Soviet Union); or like the ASEAN nations they have simply been preoccupied with Southeast Asian affairs and have paid little heed to the South Pacific. At bottom, recency, indifference, lack of access or other limiting circumstances have prevented a number of outside powers from crystallizing and practicing policies that are well honed and truly in place. Until such crystallization becomes more evident, outside power behavior will be more volatile, or at least more tentative and experimental, than those searching for confident projections for the region might prefer.

As a group, the Pacific island countries are economically weak, dependent and vulnerable. As populations grow, there is little to compensate through

indigenously generated wealth. Most have no industries to speak of. Most rely on one or two cash crops or catches. Only PNG and New Caledonia contain known natural resources of international market consequence. Pacific country EEZ (exclusive economic zones) seabeds have to date not yielded optimistic forecasts of natural wealth. The more important companies operating in the islands are foreign. The region's trade is only incidentally intramural. It instead flows beyond, predominantly to former or continuing metropolitan powers - the ANZUS countries, Japan and France. The island countries are moreover deeply dependent on outside power technical assistance and a host of civil aid measures. We are reminded that PNG, the region's largest and in respects most economically viable member, has for years had its ongoing budgetary requirements lavishly subsidized by Australia.

These economic circumstances are familiar, but warrant underscoring for purpose of their foreseeable political effects. The guiding assumption is that, within ten or fifteen years, these circumstances will not materially change. The island countries will remain poor and sorely dependent. They will not be able to dispense with a sizeable outside power presence, in aid form or otherwise. The question therefore is who will likely be providing such economic backup, and with what political implications.

Probably the most plausible forecast is that it is the western outside powers that will continue their dominant economic roles. One explanation is simply that of habit; recipient countries will continue what has become familiar and for the most part has not been overbearing. A second reason is that some of the alternatives will probably remain politically unpalatable. The Soviets are not welcome politically, are regarded as strangers, and are

part of a perceived great power rivalry that could flare up if they were allowed greater economic access to the region. Australia's and in degree New Zealand's panicked reaction in 1976 to the prospect of Soviet aid to Tonga and Western Samoa in exchange for certain facilities will surely remain in the consciousness of regional countries. These countries can expect to extract more assistance from the ANZUS powers, but credibly cannot afford to push them to the brink of alienation. The Chinese are more benignly regarded than are the Soviets and have relatively little to offer. But their persistence in matching or checkmating Soviet initiatives is theatre that island countries will not wish to encourage.

Carried thus far, our scenario has the strong inference, that, continuing in their pervasive regional economic role, outside powers will continue to exercise disproportionate political influence. This will likely be the fact, but with some variations on prevailing trends being possible and even likely.

First, the balance between and among donor nations could well shift, carrying corresponding political overtones. The subregionalization of aid programs is already moving away from the conventional practice of Australia being preeminently active in Melanesia, New Zealand in Polynesia and the U.S. in Micronesia. So as not to become overdependent on a single donor, PNG welcomes New Zealand aid, and Western Samoa welcomes Australian aid. Given its far greater resources, Australia already outstrips New Zealand in the amount of money it injects into the Pacific island countries, even if assistance to PNG is discounted. New Zealand's endemic economic troubles could easily contribute to a widening of the gap. After a time, the disparities might reach such an order of magnitude that New Zealand's

political weight in the region could perceptibly recede. If for sake of discussion successive governments in Australia continue to stand closely with the United States on regional security issues while New Zealand becomes a kind of odd man out in ANZUS, or indeed if de facto or de jure ANZUS is reconstituted without New Zealand, from a general western point of view New Zealand's relative economic - and by indirection political - retraction in the region might not be lamented.

There are some other calculations to be made, including those involving the United States. Apart from its substantial economic commitments to the Micronesian territories, the U.S. has only very light aid programs directed at the island countries. These programs are in fact of a volunteer and indirect character. Should various congressional and other advice prevail and the U.S. were to adopt straightforward, bilateral aid programs toward the islands much of the present, regional aid/politics equation would shift. If the U.S. instituted aid programs of any significance in countries previously served mostly by Australia and New Zealand it probably would run the risk of sooner or later offending Canberra and Wellington at least on complaints of turf and precedent. Probably more importantly, as a newcomer donor who also happened to be a great power without satisfactory, pan-regional credentials, the U.S. could become embroiled in controversies with recipient countries in ways that the Australians and New Zealanders do not precipitate.

Whatever any forthcoming U.S. aid role in countries presently dominated by Australian and New Zealand aid programs, a prospective American role in presently French controlled territories could produce a different set of political outcomes. Assuming that New Caledonia and/or French Polynesia will

have moved to independent or virtually independent status roughly by the year 2000, it would not be improbable that American commercial interests would take a keen interest and that official aid would be proffered. This is said with the acknowledgement that former French territories world-wide have for the most part maintained close cultural and economic ties with France. The French themselves might nevertheless prefer to facilitate an American economic presence, perhaps as a form of counterpoint to political influence from New Zealand and Australia, the island community's closest western friends and who will probably continue to be much more publicly critical of French regional policies than will the U.S.

In the last resort, however economic assistance from outside powers is allocated, by the turn of the century the island countries are likely to be more feisty about their dependence on such aid and the quid pro quo of their political good behavior that they might infer as that being the price expected by donors. Or, even if few such inferences are drawn, there will be the simple sense of national pride. Already, from various Pacific island quarters, have come protestations about Australia and New Zealand playing Big Brother, about their undue influence in regional councils, and about the need for non-island states to be more sensitive to that somewhat amorphous notion of The Pacific Way.

Defense assistance and protection for island countries can also be foreseen as having a more troubled passage by end of century than currently obtains. It is well to remember that, even apart from various defense cooperation programs, the Pacific island community is substantially covered by some form, literal or implied, of outside, western power defense protection.

The French territories remain garrisoned by French forces. American Samoa will foreseeably remain in the U.S. hands and falls directly under the American defense mantle. Neighboring Western Samoa has at various times by extension been construed as falling within the ANZUS ambit. New Zealand retains explicit defense responsibility for the Cook Islands, Tokelau and Niue. The U.S. will continue to exercise treaty-linked influence over the use of abandoned defense facilities in Tuvalu and Kiribati into the 1990's. U.S. arrangements for control over the defense of Micronesian territories will continue into the 21st century. Australia has no formal commitment to defend PNG, but traditional connections and informal understandings impose special responsibilities on it.

It is also well to recall that the ANZUS partnership is welcome throughout most of the Pacific island region, and that several island countries have over time indicated interest in becoming associated with the alliance in some form. The ANZUS nations have sensibly demurred, both because of what such additions would do to the integrity and intimacy of ANZUS, and because such steps could aggravate regional great power rivalry.

All the same, outside, western power contributions to regional country defense arrangements face more rather than fewer complications in the years to come. Even if no local emergencies arise and assistance from protecting outside powers is not invoked, sensitivity - indeed hypersensitivity - about outside power military intentions is likely to become more standard fare in the region. A recent example is the exclamation of a former PNG foreign minister that New Zealand's proposed armed forces reconfiguration to enhance rapid deployment was an ominous sign of "gunboat diplomacy" in the South

Pacific. Another example is the apprehension in the Solomons particularly that the U.S. military action in Grenada could quite literally presage American gunboat diplomacy in the South Pacific when the U.S. found itself in some dispute with a tiny and defenseless regional country.

It is not likely that the formal or implied outside power defense commitments to island countries will need to be invoked against the major communist powers. This does not however imply that the region's defense security will be carefree. The prospect of an overt clash between Indonesia and PNG over Irian Jaya border problems lingers. The Indonesians would not appear to have any interest in aggravating their Irian Jaya troubles by chewing off parts of PNG and, inter alia, thereby prospectively having to deal with Australia. Since no skirmishing on the border beyond a low level is likely, Australia will not need to make a hard choice between "defending" PNG, and maintaining its special Indonesian relationship. The trend that Indonesia's continuing scrapping with PNG could accelerate, however, is that Indonesia would continue to forfeit opportunities to become the principal bridge between the ASEAN and Pacific island communities. The Malaysians would then probably continue to develop the principal ASEAN presence, with political influence following economic involvement.

But, whether the motive is to create a fire brigade for regionwide deployment, or somehow to remind potential, outside nation governments such as the Indonesian or the French that the island community will not be intimidated, a multinational regional force such as Julius Chan once recommended has no serious prospect of success. The smaller regional states would only become more apprehensive about bigger power (e.g., PNG)

aspirations. After all, among the island countries, only PNG, Fiji and Tonga have armed forces as such, only the first two have any meaningful capability, and PNG's is by far greater than Fiji's. Second, in part because of the existing or foreseeably continuing network of outside power defense commitments, these same powers will continue to be averse to encouraging regional military fire brigades whose composition and utilization could lead to an obfuscation of the assumed terms of existing protective aprons and defense pledges. An action such as PNG's assistance, with Australian backup, to suppress the rebellion on Espiritu Santo on Vanuatu could, as an ad hoc event, conceivably be repeated. Even in the Santo case, however, Fiji's nose was somewhat bent out of joint over how PNG comported itself. In sum, little embellishment to standing features of defense cooperation and protection is in prospect.

The Pacific island community is devoted to the principle of eliminating or containing great power rivalry within the region. Being small, frail and far removed from the centers of international competition, the resident countries wish to avoid becoming pawns or victims. Their means to accomplish this are not however straight and easy, and very likely will become more difficult as uncomfortable policy dilemmas are imposed.

The issue of limitation of great power rivalry in the region can be approached from both diplomatic and defense vantage points. The first dimension entails choices of diplomatic representation and of membership in international movements or in blocs and alliances. The recent diplomatic pattern in the region is quite straightforward. Western nations and especially Australia and New Zealand are the most visible among outside powers

in terms of residential diplomatic representation. The U.S. on its part is stepping up its own regional representation. The Soviets lack any residential representation, while the Chinese are present in PNG, Fiji and in Western Samoa.

The western and especially ANZ predominance is easily explained. Australia's and New Zealand's geographic proximity, prior and largely benign colonial connections, high level aid programs, innate interest in the region, and the personal ties and moderate politics of regional elites all add up. The Soviets have been rebuffed because in large measure their situation is the reverse of Australia's and New Zealand's regional assets, because their invited presence would itself inspire great power rivalry in the region, and lastly because of ANZUS nation advice that Moscow be kept out. The Chinese have been able to establish some entree because they have not been perceived to be as menacing as the Soviets (and indeed behave as friends of the west), and because, after initial doubts, the outside western powers raised no objection. Vanuatu's case is to date aberrant. As a matter of professed neutrality and evenhandedness, no recognition has been extended either to the U.S. or to the Soviet Union. Vanuatu has also stirred controversy by establishing nonresident relations with Cuba, and has become the only regional nation to join the Non-aligned Movement.

Looking ahead toward the end of the century, the existing general pattern, with Vanuatu as the exception, would appear to have reasonable but not sanguine prospects to survive. A continually elusive variable will be the outlooks and political temper of the succeeding generation of regional elites. More substantively, the regional pattern could well be disturbed, and

there would be "more Vanuatus," or diplomatic proclivities even more extreme than Vanuatu's, if the French territories are beset by commotion and then emerge with a bruised and angry governing elite that holds little sentimental brief for the west. There also is the Chinese factor. Chinese influence, and the regional countries' political receptivity of China, will probably either be as much as it is now - low key and of little direct impact - or tilting toward negative. China's regional role is largely a transposition of its dispute with the Soviets. Hence China supports a western political and security presence in the South Pacific. In so doing it essentially confirms western country regional preferences. But China's anti-Sovietism, which dominates its desire to preempt or counteract the Soviets, is to repeat a form of major power rivalry transferred to the region. That is an unwelcome notion in the region, and its manifestation could spill over and prompt resident countries to review their prevailing, essentially pro-western aligned stance. In this sense, because of the way it is carried out, China's pro-western approach in the region could by indirection be injurious to western interests.

The comment regarding the plainly pro-western orientation of most Pacific island countries leads into the rather more complex issue of outside power defense entitlements. Nuclear considerations apart, the basic question is whether these western privileges are likely to be challenged as being out of keeping with avowed regional interests that stress an escape from major power rivalries. Two related perspectives can be applied to this question. The first addresses the prospect of the introduction of a non-western military presence in or around the island countries. The second addresses prospects facing the retention of existing western defense facilities, or the introduction of new ones.

It is well to bear in mind that the fundamental, western power rationale in the area is strategic denial, specifically vis-a-vis the USSR. The island countries do appreciate this consideration, but as a regional matter rather than as the local manifestation of the global context of great power competition. Their perception is that the success of strategic denial means exclusion of Soviet footholds and thereby exclusion of intraregional competition for political and security advantage. For the time being they do not view the preponderance of western power as in itself provocative toward the Soviets, and thereby as regionally destabilizing. As with diplomatic policies, the survival of these attitudes will depend heavily on the next generation of elites. But certain special events may intervene. Again, an agitated process of decolonization in the French territories could tempt an attitude of a ~~curse-on-both-great-power-camp-houses~~. While the point is stretched, Vanuatu might continue to flirt with such notions as allowing Soviet naval visits, and an independent New Caledonia might become equally unsporting toward western powers and their interests. In a dozen or fifteen years, the U.S. in particular might regard such prospects - not just realities - with utmost gravity. The reason is that if the strategic balance in the western Pacific were to shift away from the U.S. and its allies, if the Philippine bases became untenable, then the strategic lines of communication leading southward from the eastern edge of Micronesia, into the vicinity of Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and New Caledonia, down into the Tasman Sea and round the southern coast of Australia would receive more active attention. It would be an open question whether the United States would press Kiribati and Tuvalu hard to renew the then-expiring treaty clauses designed to keep

unwanted third parties out, and to continue arrangements for possible U.S. return to abandoned defense facilities. It would also be an open question whether in such circumstances the U.S. would exert uncommonly firm pressure to insure that Vanuatu and New Caledonia did not permit Soviet interposition. If only for the sake of argument, such American pressure, even in a cause the remainder of island countries regard as sensible, could offend their sensibilities about big power heavyhandedness, and thereby reduce western political standing generally.

The possible loss or degradation of American naval and air bases in the Philippines would be a powerful political as well as strategic blow to the U.S. For a host of reasons, reconstituting such facilities in Japan or in Western Australia would be unfeasible. Despite depreciation of effectiveness and the costs involved, the only alternative would be relocation on Guam, and very likely the reactivation of facilities on Tinian and Saipan in the Northern Marianas. The U.S. might also find it militarily expedient to increase its presence in the Micronesian entities now heading for independence, and especially to invoke clauses in its arrangements with Palau for contingency use of military reservations.

Guam and the Northern Marianas are American territory. The Micronesian territories will be independent states, freely associated with the U.S. for 50 years, well beyond the year 2000. These considerations are not immaterial, but they could come to lose much of their meaning should a major U.S. strategic shift into Micronesia be undertaken. Right or wrong, peoples on the affected land masses could protest. Their governments, which will be included in regional councils such as the South Pacific Forum, could raise an alarm.

The South Pacific regional countries could well perceive the whole American enterprise as chilling reminder of what great powers do when it suits them, including introducing military might more squarely into the region and conceivably prompting a Soviet riposte. The U.S. and other western powers would however probably swallow island country displeasure and loss of political welcome as the price of salvaging vital military capabilities west of Hawaii.

The nuclear factor overlaps military basing and weapons systems issues. The island community has a collective abhorrence for things nuclear. The Americans tested nuclear weapons in Micronesia for years. The French continue to do so Mururoa, and have indicated they would probably be proceeding for another fifteen years - i.e., until about 2000. China has tested ICBM delivery vehicles in the area, and the U.S. continues to do so. Problems associated with nuclear waste disposal exercise the island countries. As nuclear armed U.S. vessels and occasional Soviet attack submarines ply the South Pacific waters, the resident countries are unnerved by the prospect of nuclear weapons being employed in anger in the region.

The middle-range future suggests three ways in which nuclear related contingencies could affect the region's political and strategic development. One is French testing, which will apparently continue regardless of who governs in Paris, and of how strongly the island countries complain. The island community's disapproval of France is compounded by dissatisfaction with its regional decolonization process. The net effect will likely be more, and more severe, attacks heaped on France on both fronts. In the course of these attacks the island countries could find themselves frustrated by absence of

equal fervor on the part of Australia and New Zealand, which are members of the South Pacific regional structure and among the area's most influential partners. Similarly, the telescoping of French nuclear testing and decolonization policies could incrementally contribute to political radicalism in the region, further upsetting relations with the ANZUS nations.

A second, nuclear-related domain of contention surrounds proposals for a regional nuclear-free zone (NFZ). If adopted, a zone of the type proposed by Australia at the 1984 South Pacific Forum meetings would in and of itself have little bearing on island country-outside power relations. Prospective injunctions against nuclear proliferation, nuclear testing, and nuclear waste disposal suit nearly everyone, including most outside powers. Freedom of the high seas would not be restricted under an NFZ scheme, and each regional nation would decide for itself whether it would allow port visits to outside power naval units without reference to their armament or propulsion. The U.S. and France would not in any event realistically be expected to accede to denuclearizing their own regional territories, namely Guam and French Polynesia, in the face of some hortatory Forum proclamation.

A potential problem would however seem to lie below rather than on the surface of such an NFZ proposal. Since the original, 1975 regional zone scheme was adumbrated, a key lesson has been that a great deal of what transpires depends on the interest, initiative and pleasure of Australia and New Zealand. Until mid-1984 the two ANZAC partners essentially harmonized their positions. The election of Labour to office in New Zealand in July 1984 constituted a major change in New Zealand nuclear matters, both as they pertain to ANZUS alliance affairs and in regard to the outlying South Pacific

community. Two related consequences are possible. With New Zealand and Australia out of synchronization, the island community countries will have less firm guidance than in past, thus rendering the regional decision-making process, and an approach to consensus-building, more complicated. It could also aggravate differences toward the west and nuclear matters specifically already manifest among regional members, as for instance between Vanuatu and Fiji. Moreover, assuming the New Zealand government's position remains fixed, its displeasure with things nuclear could, even in the face of Australian objection, induce wider anti-nuclear sentiment among island countries. This could mean holding out for tougher NFZ terms or, following New Zealand's example, as a matter of national choice refusing to accept visits by nuclear powered or armed vessels. The current user of such privileges in selected island countries is the U.S. The loss of occasional port visit opportunities in the current South Pacific context would be of little practical consequence. But pressures could be exerted on or within the new Micronesian entities to forbid such visits. Should this arise, the implications for U.S.-Micronesian relations would be most unpleasant, especially in light of prospective military prerogatives that the U.S. will be enjoying there. Moreover, speculations about the Micronesian territories aside, a combined New Zealand-South Pacific island nation boycott of American ship visits would make it more awkward for Australian governments, especially Australian Labor party governments, to maintain currently hospitable ship visit policies, and could carry over into the domain of existing American defense installations on Australian territory. Access to Australia is of dramatically greater strategic importance to the U.S. than is access to New Zealand or to the South

Pacific islands. Hence the spillover effect from the context of a regional NFZ, with New Zealand's conduct indicating ANZUS nation discord and tempting island countries to follow in kind, could contribute to a profound change in the regional security equation.

The third, nuclear-related scenario brings us back to American defense connections with the Micronesian territories. The U.S. does not have nor does it contemplate bases as such in the emerging entities. But, even if basing problems in the Philippines do not cause the U.S. to invoke contingency facility use in the Micronesian areas outside Guam and the Northern Marianas, the prospect of heightened local displeasure with a U.S. presence cannot be discounted. Whether any such criticism could impair U.S. access is problematical. But there already are such precedents as a mass sit-in by the Marshall Islanders at the missile testing range at Kwajalein as an assertion of land rights, and coordination between Micronesian and French territory movements seeking not only independence but comprehensive, regional denuclearization.

Decolonization is another, major political theme that preoccupies the Pacific island countries. Both the U.S.-associated Micronesian entities and the French territories remain unevolved into independence, but it is the latter that really offends regional sensibilities. Resentment of France is of course magnified by criticisms of its nuclear testing program. Since France has indicated that the testing program will last another fifteen years, it is not unlikely to consider an act of self-determination in Polynesia before the turn of the century. Indigenous independence sentiment is to be sure weaker there than in New Caledonia. In New Caledonia, the French have promised

self-determination by 1989. But the indigenous independence parties wish to hasten the process and have threatened to boycott interim elections and other territorial events.

The combination of New Caledonian independence party impatience, public goading of France by South Pacific island countries and by Vanuatu particularly, the complex ethnic composition of New Caledonia and France's own economic and political interests there could well become combustible. The French themselves have warned of something on the order of a white "Rhodesian" outcome if French authority were retracted and radical, indigenous movements tried to force their way to power, with bitterness and bloodshed the result. Such a scenario aside, it is well to recall that New Caledonia has already been disrupted by political violence. More commotion is the likely prognosis.

A critical consideration is that if New Caledonia is to undergo a sharply divisive political transition, and then be governed by Kanaka elites who were radicalized in the independence movement, there would be considerably wider implications for the region. Militant champions of New Caledonian independence, such as Vanuatu, could then be found working with new, regional ideological friends rather than remaining a distinct minority within the South Pacific community. If only to escape isolation and labels of political reaction, other, more moderate island countries could in the meantime have been thrust into tough-minded positions. The entire community could in fact undergo a tilt toward a more assertive, radical and possibly anti-western posture, especially if it was felt that outside western powers had let the community down on the New Caledonian issue.

A politically radical New Caledonia could feature such measures as allowing Soviet diplomatic representation and civil aid, and generally being unsympathetic toward western interests. There already have been intimations that the Kanak Socialist Independence Front has been establishing links with Libya. New Caledonia's geostrategic location would add to misgivings in ANZUS capitals as well as in Beijing and in Tokyo. It is also possible that anti-colonial momentum generated over New Caledonia would spill over into Micronesia. While the U.S. would likely have foresaken its United Nations-sponsored, strategic trust political control by the time of New Caledonia's independence, the prospective terms of treaties with the Micronesian entities could easily be turned on as forms of lingering colonialism, inherently unequal and forcibly extracted. Given the strategic stakes involved, the United States would not wish to contemplate a revision of the defense terms of the treaties, whether the pressures to do so were of local or of broader, Pacific island community origin. The potential radicalization of an independent New Caledonia would be disincentive, not incentive, to surrender American rights over the Micronesian entities' external affairs, or access to defense facilities.

These speculations about the South Pacific region's future have focused on political and strategic themes, primarily as identified by member countries themselves, and with particular reference to great power interplay. With all the requisite caution about foreseeing conditions at the turn of the century, it would appear that the political and strategic format in the region will be somewhat different, and more unsettled and troubled than it is today. Outside powers will themselves have substantially contributed to the shape of things

to come. Their capacity for political management in the region will have been attenuated. Vis-a-vis one another, they will not likely be in the kind of virtual state of stasis that has characterized the past years.